

CHAPTER 6

NEW CONSTRUCTION - RESIDENTIAL

INTRODUCTION

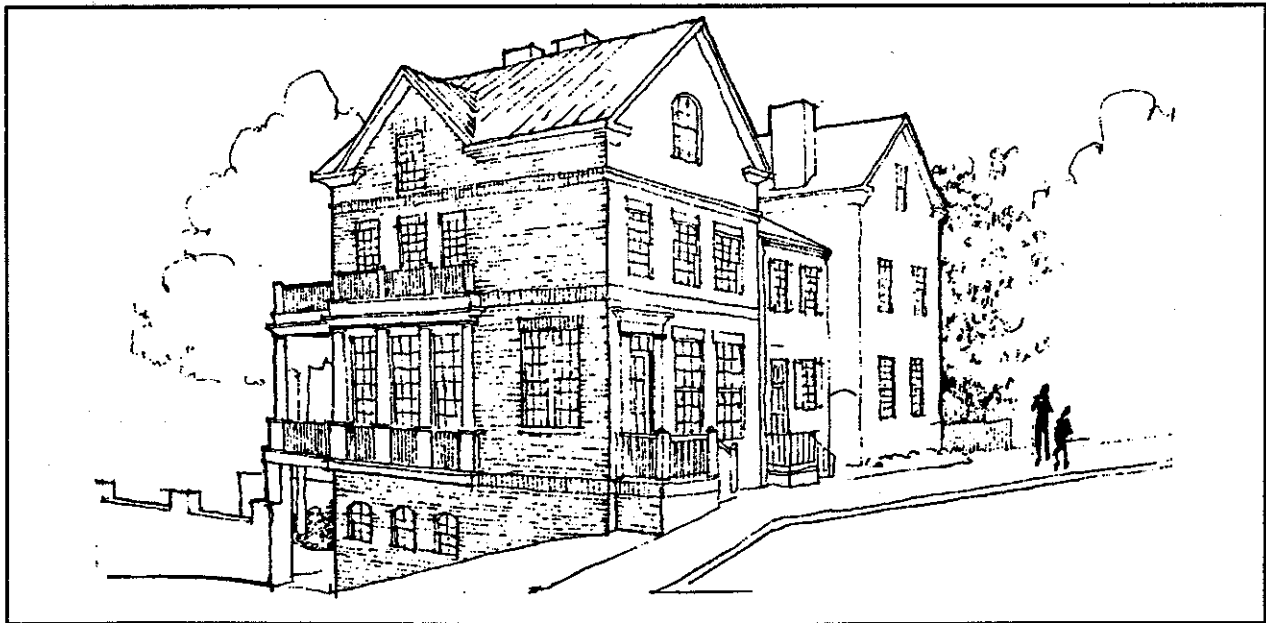
The construction of new residential buildings that are visible from a public way require the review and approval of a certificate of appropriateness by the Boards of Architectural Review.

The character of the historic districts is primarily defined by its residential structures. Such structures range in age from before the founding of the city in 1749 to the current day. Expansion of the housing stock within the historic districts is continual. Since the establishment of the Board of Architectural Review in 1946, the design of new residential buildings has been one of its primary concerns. These guidelines are intended to

provide information to property owners within the historic districts about the Boards' philosophy regarding the design of new residential buildings.

These guidelines apply to all new residential construction projects that lie outside of the waterfront area or that do not front on Washington Street. Residential construction projects in these areas must meet additional requirements and these are set forth in the Guidelines for Washington Street and the Guidelines for the Waterfront. The waterfront area is defined in the Zoning Ordinance as Height District #3, Potomac River, whose boundaries run east of Union Street to the River and extend from Pendleton Street south to the Woodrow Wilson Bridge (\$6-400 of the Zoning Ordinance).

Generally speaking, there are only scattered parcels of vacant land in the historic districts which are suitable for the development of new residential construction projects without demolishing an existing structure. The demolition of an existing historic building to permit construction of a new residential structure is strongly discouraged by the Boards. Therefore, most new residential projects are in-fill construction that make use of a vacant



Perspective view of new townhouse in relation to existing adjacent residential structures.
SOURCE: 700 South Lee Street, BAR Case #90-176, Robert Morris, Morris Damm, Inc., Architects

lot. In these cases, the Boards are primarily concerned with the compatibility of a new building with adjacent historic structures.

The guidelines should be viewed as a distillation of previously accepted design approaches in the historic districts. The guidelines should not be viewed as a device that dictates a specific design response nor should the guidelines be viewed as prohibiting a particular design approach. There may be better ways to meet some design objectives that have not been reviewed by the Boards in the past. New and untried approaches to common design problems are encouraged and should not be rejected out of hand simply because they appear to be outside the common practices outlined in the guidelines.

Architectural styles in Alexandria have been more conservative than in other parts of the country. The approvals of the Boards have reflected this since the establishment of the historic districts. As a general rule, the Boards favor contextual background buildings which allow historic structures to maintain the primary visual importance. Singular buildings in the latest architectural vocabulary are generally discouraged.

It is not the intention of the Boards to dilute design creativity in residential buildings. Rather, the Boards seek to promote compatible development that is, at once, both responsive to the needs and tastes of the late 20th century while being compatible with the historic character of the districts. This balancing act will clearly be different in different sections of the historic districts.

These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the guidelines for specific architectural elements contained in Chapter 2. For example, that chapter contains information on such topics as window and door treatments, siding and chimneys and flues which must be appropriately combined to create a building that is compatible with the architecture in the districts.

As a general rule, the Boards do not review conceptual design plans. The Boards strongly prefer to review complete design submissions. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to meet with B.A.R. Staff as early as possible during the design development stage to review proposals and zoning requirements.



Proposal for two new Colonial Revival style townhouses, each of which faces a different street.
SOURCE: 370 N. St. Asaph St. & 600 Princess St., BAR Case #91-102, Historical Concepts, Inc., architects

REQUIREMENTS

- All applications for new construction must comply with the requirements of the zoning regulations prior to consideration by the Boards of Architectural Review. The specific requirements may be obtained from the Zoning Administrator (703/838-4688).

- New construction must conform to the requirements of the applicable small area plan chapter of the Master Plan. In the Old and Historic Alexandria District the Small Area Plans include Old Town, Old Town North, Northeast and Potomac Yard/Potomac Greens. In the Parker-Gray District, the applicable Small Area Plans are Braddock Road Metro Station and Northeast.

- Side, Front and Rear Yard Requirements
The Zoning Ordinance requires that residential buildings must be removed a certain number of feet from a property line. This setback will depend upon the specific zone and the width of the lot.

- Open Space Requirements
The Zoning Ordinance requires that a certain amount of land in residential zones be maintained as open space to ensure adequate light and air, absorb water runoff and help prevent the spread of fire. The amount of open space required varies by zone. Driveways and parking areas cannot be used to satisfy the open space requirement.

As a general rule, land under a covering such as a canopy, roof, eave, or deck may not be counted as part of the required open space.

- Vision clearance
There is a general City requirement that buildings on corner lots must maintain a vision clearance at the corner for purposes of transportation safety. In such instances, structures may be no higher than 42" (3' 6") above the curb. There is also a general policy to maintain the average front building line in the historic districts. Therefore, the Zoning Ordinance gives the Boards of Architectural Review the power to waive this requirement as well as other yard requirements in the vision clearance area where the

maintenance of the building line is important to the character of the blockface.

- Generally speaking, building height for residential construction is limited to 35 feet but may be increased in certain zones to 45 feet with approval of a Special Use Permit by City Council.

- New residential projects which involve three or more units require the approval of a Site Plan by the Planning Commission (See §11-400 of the Zoning Ordinance). Information on Site Plan requirements may be obtained from the Site Plan Coordinator, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services, Room 4130, City Hall (Telephone: (703/838-4318)).

New residential construction which requires the approval of a Site Plan must comply with the provisions of the Alexandria Archaeological Protection Procedure (§11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance). The specific requirements may be obtained from the City Archaeologist, Alexandria Archaeology, 105 North Union Street, 3rd Floor. (Telephone: (703/838-4399)).

- Construction of all new buildings must meet the requirements of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC) and requires the issuance of a building permit by Code Enforcement.

- Construction of new multi-family buildings must meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- Tree removal for new construction requires prior approval of the City Arborist.

- New residential construction, both single and multi-family, must include off-street parking. (See Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance).

- New residential construction on lots which involve land disturbance of 2,500 square feet or more of land area must comply with the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Protection Ordinance.

GUIDELINES

- Applicants should consult Building Alterations, Chapter 2, regarding guidelines for specific elements of a proposed new building. For example, Chapter 2 provides information on compatible window treatments, paint colors and building materials.

- Style

No single architectural style is mandated. Designs should complement and reflect the architectural heritage of the City. For example, abstraction of historic design elements would be preferred to a building which introduces design elements that are not commonly used in the historic districts. While new residential buildings in the historic districts should not create an appearance with no historical basis, direct copying of buildings is discouraged.

- Massing

~~Building~~ Building massing is the enclosed volume which constitutes a building's exterior form. In the historic districts, new residential construction should reflect the building massing prevailing along the blockface. For example, uneven massing should be avoided along a blockface which has buildings of

uniform massing.

- Height

Building height should generally reflect the existing heights of buildings in the immediate vicinity of the proposed new construction.

- *Single family houses*

Most single family houses in the historic districts are 2 or 3 stories in height. New single family residential construction should generally reflect this prevailing pattern.

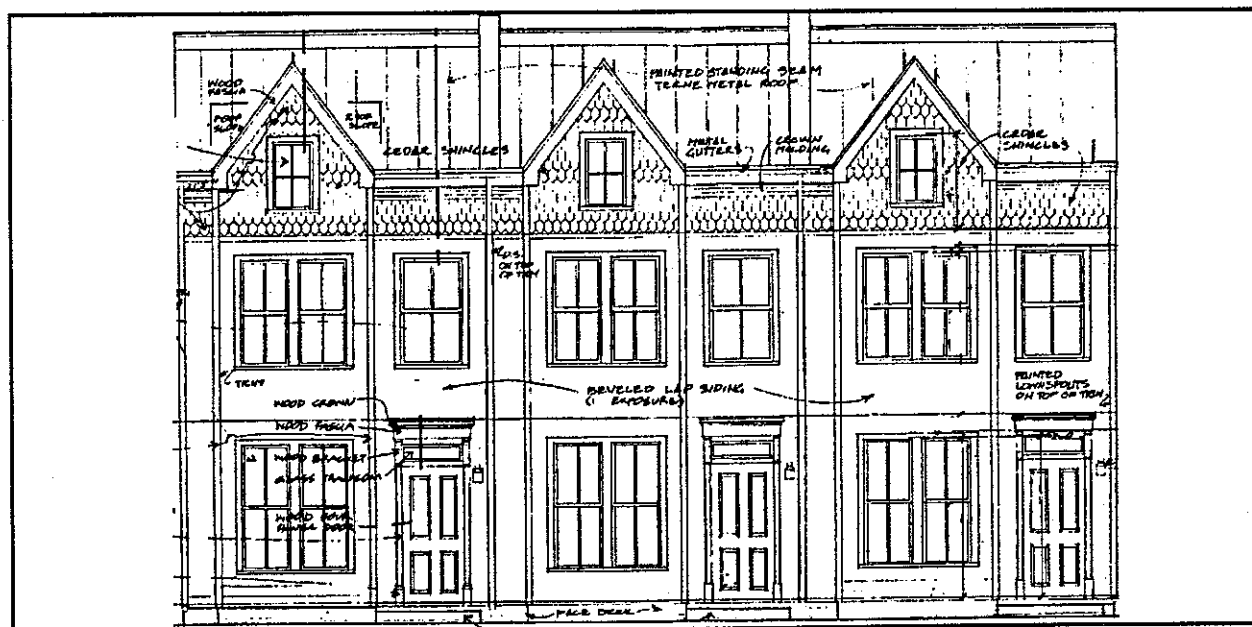
- Multi-family structures

Multi-family structures such as apartment buildings often exceed the prevailing height of single family houses. Such structures may be constructed to the maximum permitted height by zone, but should not overwhelm adjacent buildings.

- Width

- *Single family houses*

Most single family houses in the historic districts are 20 to 35 feet in width. New single family residential construction should generally reflect this traditional pattern.



Proposal for three new Victorian style residential townhouses.

SOURCE: 1320-1324 Princess Street, BAR Case #90-15PG, John Savage, Architect, P.C.

- Multi-family structures

In general, multi-family structures such as apartment buildings are much wider than single family residential structures. The facade articulation should be compatible with nearby buildings.

• Siting

New residential structures should be sited so that the front plane of the building is in line with the prevailing plane of the other residential buildings on the street. Such a requirement has a long history in Alexandria. The founding act of the city in 1748 required houses "to be in line with the street...."

Side and rear yard setbacks should also reflect the prevailing pattern in the immediate vicinity of the proposed new construction.

• Fenestration

The fenestration pattern, that is the relationship of solid to void, such as walls and windows, should be compatible with the historic fenestration patterns in the districts. For example, buildings which express very large areas of void are discouraged.

• Roof

In general, the roof form should reflect the roof forms expressed along the blockface. However, as a general rule, the gable end of a structure should not face the street. Such a requirement has a long history in Alexandria. The founding act of the city in 1748 required "that no gable or end of such house to be on or next to the street...."

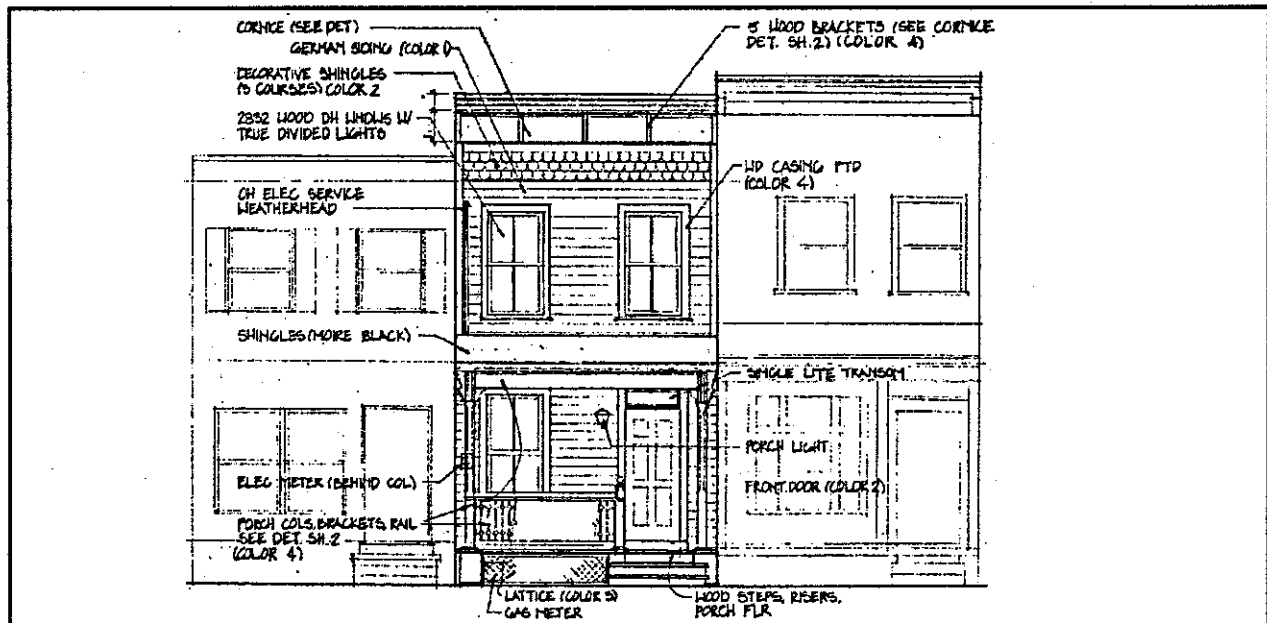
Roofing materials should reflect the traditional use of wood, metal and slate in the historic districts. Additional information is provided in the Roofing section of Chapter 2, Building Alterations.

• Spacing Between Buildings

The spacing or lack of it between a new residential building and existing structures should reflect the pattern of spacing between buildings along the blockface to maintain a consistent rhythm. For example, party wall rowhouse construction is inappropriate in certain areas of the historic districts which have large detached residential buildings.

• Building Orientation

The front entrances to new residential buildings should be oriented to the primary street frontage.



Proposal for a new infill residential building between two existing houses.

SOURCE: 307 North West Street, BAR Case #92-6PG, Frank Deichmeister, Design Plus, Architects

- Architectural Detailing

Architectural detailing such as cornices, lintels, arches, and chimneys should express the traditional quality and quantity of architectural detailing found on historic structures throughout the districts.

Side and rear walls which face open areas should be designed with as much attention to detail as the primary facade. It is the general preference of the Boards that surface articulation be provided on otherwise unrelieved side walls to break-up apparent massing through such means as the articulation of false windows, pilasters and changes in brick patterns.

- Directional Expression

The orientation of a building to the street is important. The relationship of height and width of a proposed new residential building should reflect the prevailing pattern along the blockface. For example, wide buildings are not encouraged in areas of narrow row-houses.

- Materials

The predominant building materials for residential buildings in the historic districts are wood and brick. In addition, there are a

number of stone buildings. The building materials for new residential structures should reflect these traditional materials.

- Utilities

While the Boards are cognizant of 20th century infrastructure requirements, such items as electrical meters and transformers and HVAC equipment should be visually and acoustically screened from public view.

- Color

The colors proposed for new residential buildings should be compatible with those in use on historic buildings in the districts. The B.A.R. Staff has developed a *Color Chart of Historically Accurate Paint Colors in the Old and Historic Alexandria District and the Parker-Gray District* which can be consulted to help determine appropriate colors which reflect the historic heritage of the City.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to properly evaluate the appropriateness of a design for new construction, the Boards of Architectural Review require that an accurate depiction of the design and its



Proposal for a new three story brick apartment building.

SOURCE: 109-111 South West Street, BAR Case #91-170, John Savage, Architect, P.C.

relationship to the immediately surrounding area be presented. Sketches are not acceptable. Most designs for construction of new buildings presented to the Boards of Architectural Review are prepared by design professionals, such as architects and engineers; however, a professionally prepared submission is not mandatory. Applicants, however, should be aware that drawings sealed by an architect or engineer licensed in Virginia may be required by Code Enforcement prior to the issuance of a building permit.

All applications for approval of new residential construction must contain the following information:

Alexandria Business License

Proof of a valid Alexandria Business License is required at the time of application for contractors, subcontractors, architects and designers.

Photograph of Existing Conditions

Clear photographs of the site and surrounding properties are required for reference.

Plot Plan/Site Plan

A plot or site plan accurately showing the location and dimensions of the footprint of the new building including property lines, accessory structures, fences and gradelines as well as existing improvements is required. A roof plan showing water drainage and location of mechanical units should also be indicated.

Drawings

Drawings accurately representing all elevations of the proposed structure indicating materials and overall dimensions, including height, are required. In addition, a drawing showing the contextual relationship of the proposed structure to existing adjacent buildings is required. The location of such ancillary items such as HVAC units, heat pumps, roof guards, fire hose connections,

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
CONSIDERATIONS**

The construction of new residential buildings creates ground disturbing activities which may affect archaeological resources. With its rich history, the City of Alexandria is particularly concerned about its archaeological heritage. Archaeological resources in the historic districts are great in number and highly diverse in materials. They often consist of ceramic and glass fragments in the backyards of historic properties; however, archaeological resources are also brick-lined shafts in yards and basements; brick kilns; foundations, footings, postholes and builders trenches of non-extant buildings; landscape features such as walkways and gardens; and even American Indian artifacts which pre-date colonial Alexandria. Often these clues to the City's past appear to be unimportant debris, yet when the artifacts and building remains are excavated and recorded systematically, they provide the only knowledge of lost Alexandria.

Every application to the B.A.R. which potentially involves ground disturbance is reviewed by the City Archaeologist to determine whether significant archaeological resources may still survive on the property. Therefore, the potential for additional requirements to protect archaeological resources exists with any project that involves ground disturbing activities.

The applicant can speed along the archaeological review

process by requesting a Preliminary Archaeological Assessment from Alexandria Archaeology at the earliest date. Call (703) 838-4399, Tuesday through Saturday. Alexandria Archaeology is located on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

• RESIDENTIAL ZONES

In residential zones, the application for construction of new buildings is reviewed by City archaeologists. In most cases, the applicant is required to notify Alexandria Archaeology before ground disturbance, so that a City archaeologist may monitor this work and record significant finds. However, when a property has a high potential for containing significant archaeological resources, a City archaeologist may request permission to excavate test samples in the affected area before the project begins.

• COMMERCIAL ZONES

In commercial zones and for residential projects involving the construction of three or more houses, the ground disturbing activities associated with the construction of new buildings may necessitate compliance with the Alexandria Archaeological Protection Procedure (§ 11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance). The specific requirements may be obtained from the City Archaeologist. Occasionally, compliance in such projects may require the property owner to contract with an independent archaeologist to document conditions before and during construction. Property owners should contact the City Archaeologist as early as possible so that there are no project delays.

utility meters and risers should be noted on the drawings. The drawings should have a minimum scale of 3/32" = 1'; however, larger scale drawings may be required. At least one set must meet the maximum permit size of 24" x 36". Additional copies of the required drawings may be reduced if they are clearly legible.

Floor Area Ratio and Open Space Calculations

Applicants must provide accurate F.A.R. and open space calculations for the new residential construction. Forms for these calculations are available at the time of application.

Materials

The materials to be used for the structure must be specified and delineated on the drawings. Actual samples may be provided, if appropriate.

Color

The proposed color of the structure and trim-work must be indicated and actual color samples provided.

RELATED SECTIONS

- Guide to the B.A.R. Process
- Use of the design guidelines
- History of the physical development of the historic districts
- Chapter 2 - Building Alterations
 - Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities
 - Accessory Structures
 - Awnings
 - Chimneys & Flues
 - Decks
 - Exterior and Storm Doors
 - Dormers
 - Roof Drainage Systems
 - Electrical and Gas Service
 - Fences, Garden Walls & Gates
 - HVAC Systems
 - Exterior Lighting
 - Paint Colors
 - Parking
 - Driveways and Paving
 - Planters
 - Porches
 - Roofing Materials

- Security Devices
- Shutters
- Siding Materials
- Skylights
- Solar Collectors
- Stoops, Steps and Railings
- Windows
- Storm Windows

Chapter 4 - Demolition of Existing Structures

NOTE: Illustrations are provided for information only. Applications for certificates of appropriateness are reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis.

ADOPTED BY THE BOARDS OF
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW, 5/25/93